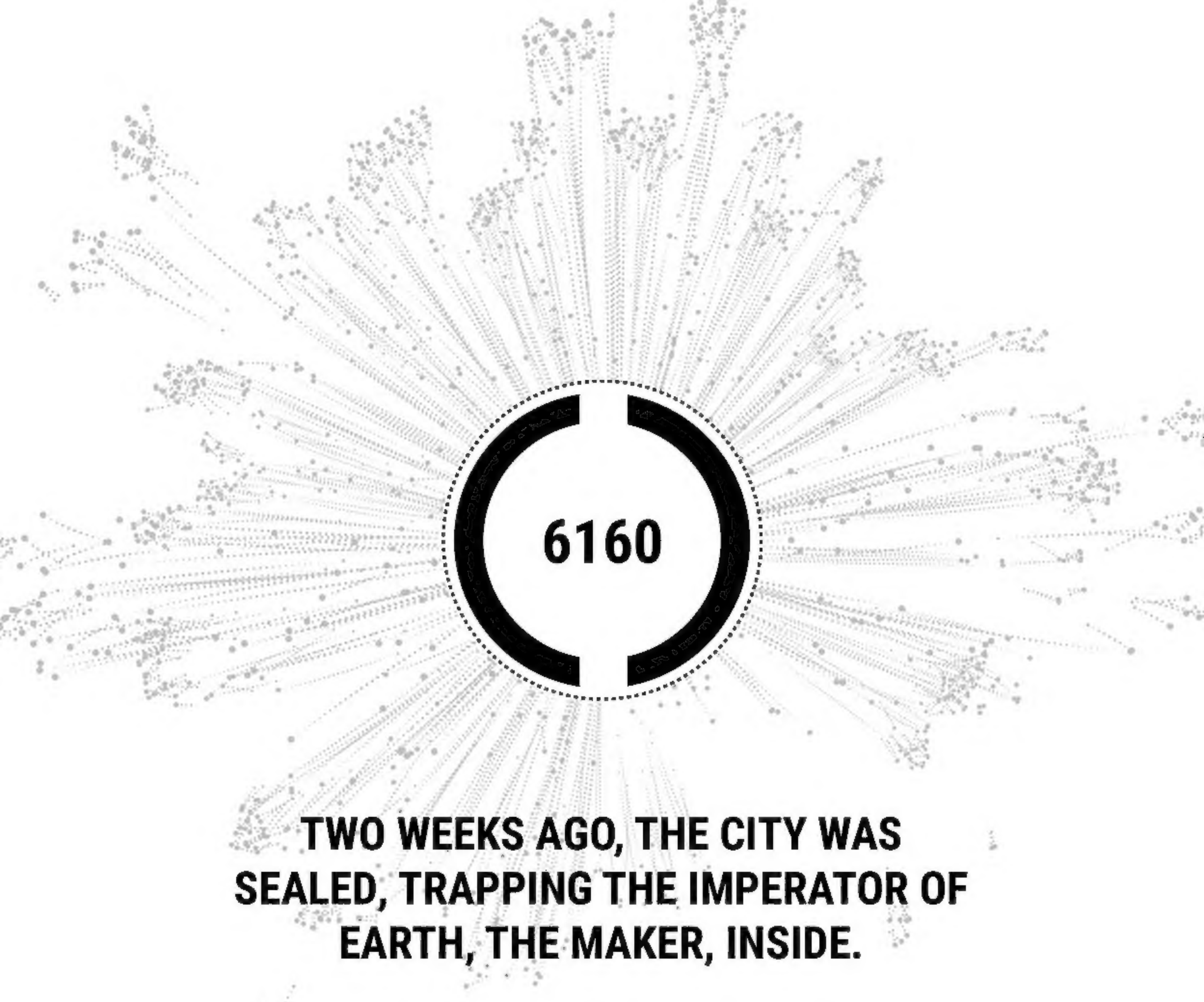
MARVEL

ULTIMATE UNIVERSE

HICKMAN
CASELLI | CURIEL



TWO WEEKS AGO, THE CITY WAS SEALED, TRAPPING THE IMPERATOR OF EARTH, THE MAKER, INSIDE.

NOW, IN HIS ABSENCE, A QUIET WAR HAS BROKEN OUT ACROSS THE PLANET TO SHAPE WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIS KINGDOM.

SOME WANT TO CONTROL THE WORLD.

SOME WANT TO FREE IT.

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Is this the one?

Complicated technology here in Asgard, but if the floor plan and schematic we obtained on arrival are correct, yes, this should be it.

However, if it were me, I would disguise my intentions. *Lie about what's inside.*

Because you never know who's watching.

The sun'll be up soon, and we don't have much time...

So we're gambling either way. Let's just get him out, Doom.

Hello. Can you hear me?

Is anyone in there?

Go away. I want no food nor drink, and I desire neither company nor conversation...

For I have nothing to say and nothing you should want to hear, as--*in accordance with the law and to my great shame*--I have been branded a traitor.

Well then, you'll be happy to know that I'm something of a lawbreaker myself...

But I'm also a free man--*righteous*--and here to throw open the cage of the wrongly imprisoned.

Lie not. I have no patience for such things.

I promise...

It is true that I am here to free one ***particular*** man...

...but only if that man is the ***god*** of ***thunder*** and ***lightning.***

I am he...

I am Thor.

We have him, Iron Lad.

Great! Come on. Let's get out of here.

Our ship's this way.

Not yet.

I have great need, and if my needs are met, then perhaps we will not need any vessel of yours.

Do you think he knows the ship he's talking about is a bleeding-edge prototype that can navigate both real and imaginary space?

I do not. But he does seem *unusually* certain.

I know. So the question I have is, what's better than a billion-dollar space-ship?

Gods and giants, look!

The prisoner is free!

Ah, Odinson. Out and about.

This is not in accordance with what was agreed nor with what was arranged.

And yet it seems you are--*once again*--craving both the stick and the correction with which it comes.

Lady Sif. I only want what is mine.

Then I will be on my way and--*though it might grieve us both*--no longer your concern.

How so, son of Asgard? Are the royal prisons not my domain? Am I not warden and, as such, you not my ward?

Should you escape, all blame will be mine.

I tell you truly, I care not for that, so you will act accordingly and return to your cell.

I am leaving.

And I am leaving with what is ***mine.***

Oh my. Are we going to fight?

I do so love it when we fight.

ZZZAKKK!

We don't have time for this. We have to go. NOW.

I will not leave without my hammer.

If you want Mjolnir so bad... come and get it, traitor.

Has it been so long that Asgard has forgotten...

I don't have to.

Hurkff!

KRAKOA FROM SPACE

It is a very impressive weapon. *Perhaps* more impressive than your very impressive ship.

Here's what I want to know: If he can summon it at will, why didn't he do that when he was in his cell?

Given what we know, there's really only one reason I can think of:

"He didn't want to."

SMASSHH!

Wait... wait...

No. I have waited long enough.

GRUUNNCH!

MJRAKH!

THOOOOM!

...

Now we may leave.

Great. The only problem is that with all the chaos and noise, we're probably going to have to fight our way to the ship...

But it's our only way out of here--what else are we gonna do?

Stand close to me.

This might feel odd.

Zoooo

Where...

Where did they go?

New York. Stark Tower.

Who is this man?

In many ways, he is the same as you and I...

A hero of an erased age. But unlike all of us--*because he is from an older, less corrupted time*--we were able to rescue him at his origin and in a state of innocence.

Unscarred, unchanged... *better, I suppose.*

Stand back.

He should be freed. As I was.

Whoa. Whoa.

You can't do it that way...

Getting him out of there is going to be a...*complicated process.*

The Maker's files are Byzantine. Because of that, we're working a little blind here--*we have no safety net, so we have to be careful.*

I believe that we could do it faster by replacing his pre-existing blood with artificial picotech, but...

...the files mention that his powers are derived from something called a "Super-Soldier Serum," which--*we must conclude*--is a blood-based augmentation.

I think we should do it anyway...

But ***some of us*** have an outsize aversion to ***risk.***

Yeah. That's me. The weirdo who doesn't want to gamble with people's lives.

Can he hear us?

I don't know. But he shouldn't fully regain consciousness until we're further along.

Hear me, brother, I would free you now--*as I would any in chains who deserve them not*--were the risks not grave and the cost so high.

But you have my word. Should the time come when such a choice must be made, you will be freed. Better to die as such than helpless and hopeless, trapped in a frozen hell.

So he might. And if he might, then there are words that should be said...

Woof. Strong words.

But promising freedom when you don't have your own seems disingenuous, Thor.

Is this Asgard, Sif? Am I in a cell?

This is not Asgard. You are not in a cell.

But do not forget who I am, and what you are to me. While you may temporarily have my leave, you do not have absolution.

So, the point of what we're doing--*and what we're arguing*--is that everything that you think is real is actually a lie.

The world is not the world it should be...

And I think you should help us *fix that.*

Why would I do that?

Because he is not supposed to be your prisoner...

He is supposed to be your *king.*

No matter what these little men say.

Pfft. You mistake royal blood for a royal crown, boy.

What do you mean... I am king?

Oh man, short version or long version?

It's convoluted, pretty messy...

Maybe you can...?

You are not the first.

The one where I understand what you mean.

Of course.

The ruler of this Earth--*our imperator*--is a man called the Maker.

And while he is trapped inside his "future city," we are presented with an opportunity. We can change this world back into the world it was supposed to be.

"You have to understand--*and this is the heart of the matter*--he is from a different universe, and he arrived here with a very specific mission:

"To systematically erase this world's heroes from existence.

"He was able to do this by denying them the circumstances and events that would have transformed them into what they were supposed to be.

"And he was able to do that because he arrived in our universe with the knowledge of the history of our Earth's heroes."

How can you know such a thing?

Because when I was his prisoner--*a captive and a tool for decades*--I was able to steal his files.

So *I know* what *he knows.*

You were supposed to be King of Asgard, Thor.

Instead he helped your brother, Loki, kill your father and steal your birthright.

He ruined your future, and not just yours but many, many more people like you. ***Like us.***

We want to set things right.

Will you help us?

It is no small thing to realize that this pain I have nursed for years was not a sickness or a flaw but instead a righteous anger.

I am with you.

And you?

...

I'll stick around for the ride.

The Maker's files have been amended over the years.

Before the City closed, I finally understood that these reference numbers by each entry were actually storage codes...

...to *this:* a repository where he keeps tokens, trinkets and, I suppose, catalysts or keys to each hero he has wronged.

It's located here, in the capital city of Latveria.

I know nothing of Earthly fortresses, but I know a well-built citadel when I see one.

They will not simply let you walk in there and take it.

Well, that's true.

If only we had some way to get there...

Magically, and in the b ink of an eye.

Latveria.

There!

There it is.

SHIT!

Shielded. How do we--

It should not be a problem. The Maker was consistent in his inconsistency...

We've always had that problem.

Any security measures that he--

Oh, *damn him*...

What?

Paranoia. There are no active passcodes that are acceptable when the City is closed.

No overrides. No contingencies. If he is locked *in there*... there is no way of quietly getting *in here*.

I am the god of thunder.

I have never concerned myself much with quiet.

...

Sure. Why not.

KRAKK-THOOOOOM

No alarms. No guards.

I dunno. Maybe you were wrong?

Doubtful.

But our mission remains unchanged...

Escape with the repository.

A goal that appears to be achievable.

Oh man...

That might not be as simple as we thought.

You say each of these contains the relics of a stolen life?

No. Each one holds around a hundred.

What could this world have been?

There's so many. We can't leave them...or just pick and choose...

Maybe we can gather them together. Jump out with them all.

Even with Mjolnir, there are limits to the area he can move.

Can you do it?

It's an evil thing, the stealing of dreams.

The work of demons and devils and souls that are damned. To make a world where men are chained to a future that is not their own-- **obscenity.**

Can I do it?

I am a god. And not bound by the limits of men.

Of course I can--

Hurrkk!

THOR!

Some men-- it seems--are a bit better than others. Non?

Vous êtes des intrus et des voleurs...

SLICE

There are consequences for crime in the capital city.

KRAK!

And today?

Captain Britain is your judge.

SMASH

I know who you are...and what you secret rulers of the world have done...

BRAGGG!

It's going to end.

And who's going to end it--you?

Whoever you might be...

SKKRUNNK!

Ah. I know that face.

Un visage de traître. Issu d'une famille de traîtres.

I want you to *remember it.*

AIIEEEEEEE!

Can you get us out of here?

-Kaff-

Aye.

Stark Tower.

I'm activating the emergency medical protocols.

But I'm... I've...

I've never used this before.

He is...my prisoner.

He cannot die on my watch.

My dad made this...

I'm sure he designed it to be automated... If it isn't, I'll...

I'll do everything I can.

It appears that much of the one repository we escaped with is a stasis/ cryogenic device meant to preserve whatever it holds...

Inside, there are many, many catalysts. We have options... and variables abound.

Latveria.

Look at what he has done to me!!!

I am blinded! Disfigured!

Je mangerai son coeur et je deviendrai fort grâce au sang.

HI NO KUNI

CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT

YRASIAN REPUBLIC

THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS

Calm yourself. You sound hysterical.

What happened? Exactly?

Stark and his companions broke into the castle and escaped with the Maker's lure.

Your injury seems to have affected not just your sight but your understanding of what you see. Howard Stark was inside the City when it closed.

No! Not the father. The son.

Et je n'oublierai pas comment tu m'as parlé ce jour, Vipère.

The son? Interesting.

We regret the loss of your eye, Captain, but we have all been wondering exactly how to deal with the vacuum of power on that continent and to claim it for ourselves...

I now see a path forward. He does not know it...

"...but the boy has given us North America.

"All we have to do is take it."

BREEP!

Something's wrong.

Targeting alert from near-Earth orbit? That doesn't make any sense... unless...

Oh no.

And how has he done that, Hulk?

By committing the acts of a tyrant... or worse...

"...those of a terrorist.

Options are limited with the Asgardian felled. Perhaps only one.

Yeah. I know...

"And what do acts of terror yield?

"Opportunity."

And how will we sell it?

HI NO KONI

CHILDREN OF ETERNAL

EURASIAN REPUBLIC

ER AND LOWER S

We do what we do.

We tell lies so large that it's inconceivable that they are fabricated or false.

And we cover that with just enough truth to sell it. We put his name on it: Stark.

And you think people will believe it when we blame the boy?

Of course they will.

After all...

"...while it's true that we are the ones who had control of the machines...

STONE WORK

"...it was his family who built them."

THE WORLD

THE WORLD

AS REMADE BY THE MAKER'S COUNCIL

- ~~THE NORTH AMERICAN UNION~~ REDISTRIBUTED
- ~~REGIONAL SUBSIDIARIES~~ REDISTRIBUTED

- THE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AMERICA
- REGIONAL CLUBS
- FRACTIONAL CULTURES

- THE EUROPEAN COALITION
- REGIONAL GOVERNORS
- FIEFDOMS

- THE CITY
- LATVERIAN TERRITORIES

- THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS
- REGIONAL DYNASTIES
- LOCAL TEMPLES

- THE EURASIAN REPUBLIC
- REGIONAL DIRECTORS
- LOCAL SCHOOLS

- THE CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT
- THE SHADOWS OF THE IMMORTAL HAND

- HI NO KUNI ("LAND OF THE SUN")
- DAIMYOS

- UNDISCOVERED TERRITORY

1963-2023

EPILOGUE

One week later.

Against a backdrop of global concern and international aid, it is with gratitude and great sorrow that we do our best to reflect on the events of last week.

And while all of us here, and millions around the world, still wait for answers about what happened that day...

...for now, all we have are questions.

BENJAMIN NICHOLSON • ROLO NIDAL

Thousands remain missing.

ROLO NIDAL • LINH NGUYEN • JAME

And while almost no physical evidence remains, local and international agencies--using GPS, digital I.D.s and other forensic data--

--have been able to create a database of unfortunate souls who may have been in the blast radius of the terror attack.

H NGUYEN • JAMES O'CONNER • WIL

Below me, those potential victims' names are scrolling on the screen.

IER • WILLIAM O'SHEA • ROLLF OLSO

People who-- according to both the data and the experts who analyzed it--

--were believed to have been near the corporate headquarters of Stane/Stark when the event occurred...

• ROLLF OLSON • EMILY OSBORN • NO

Authorities need all the help they can get, so anyone who can confirm or deny any of these names, please contact them immediately.

SBORN • NORMAN OSBORN • BROOK

And while domestically these are troubling, strange times, it seems that these events are not contained by our borders.

In Hi No Kuni, a car explosively collided with a bicycle in the streets.

And while the driver remains in serious condition, the 15-year-old girl who was hit by the car escaped without a scratch on her.

ROOKS PACE • WILLAM PACHECO • I

Elsewhere, in several of the dynastic strongholds of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms--

--there are reports of an outbreak of regional infighting and, perhaps, open insurgence.

M PACHECO • DOUGLAS PACK • MARI

Due to the volatile nature of the conflict and an accompanying media blackout, there has been very little available coverage of the events.

All that we have, we are sharing with you now, and we will keep you updated as we learn more.

Finally, we end tonight's coverage with the biggest underlying mystery regarding the recent terror attack.

Why would a teenage boy commit this terrible act?

ACK • MARIA PALACIOS • MAY PARK

OS • MAY PARKER • MARICIO PAZ • S

Some have suggested that it was because of his father and godfather's recent passing. Others have assumed that it was simple madness.

We will continue to try to find answers to these questions--

--but as Tony Stark is believed to have been in the blast, it is safe to assume that he too has perished.

MARICIO PAZ • STACI PERALTA • ALE

STACI PERALTA • ALEXANDER PRYOR

And it's very possible we may never know why he did it.

手洗い
うがい

!?

手洗い

PEACH MOMOKO writer/artist　VC's JOE CARAMAGNA letterer

Huh? A dream?

Hi-chan, you dropped this.

?

Ichiki!

You two, come see me after class.

TO BE CONTINUED THIS MARCH IN ULTIMATE X-MEN #1!